

July 20, 2014

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Introduction to the First Reading:** The author tells us that God is not only very patient with us. He is very forgiving.

**Reading [Wis 12:13, 16-19](#)**

There is no god besides you who have the care of all,  
that you need show you have not unjustly condemned.

For your might is the source of justice;  
your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all.  
For you show your might when the perfection of your power is disbelieved;  
and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity.  
But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency,  
and with much lenience you govern us;  
for power, whenever you will, attends you.  
And you taught your people, by these deeds,  
that those who are just must be kind;  
and you gave your children good ground for hope  
that you would permit repentance for their sins.

**Responsorial Psalm [Ps 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16](#)**

**R/ (5a) Lord, you are good and forgiving.**

You, O LORD, are good and forgiving,  
abounding in kindness to all who call upon you.  
Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer  
and attend to the sound of my pleading.

**R/ Lord, you are good and forgiving.**

All the nations you have made shall come  
and worship you, O LORD,  
and glorify your name.

For you are great, and you do wondrous deeds;  
you alone are God.

**R/ Lord, you are good and forgiving.**

You, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity.  
Turn toward me, and have pity on me;  
give your strength to your servant.

**R/ Lord, you are good and forgiving.**

**Introduction to the Second Reading:** Because we are not as knowledgeable as God we sometimes don't know how best to pray. But the Holy Spirit understands and helps us.

**Reading 2 [Rom 8:26-27](#)**

Brothers and sisters:  
The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness;  
for we do not know how to pray as we ought,  
but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.  
And the one who searches hearts

knows what is the intention of the Spirit,  
because he intercedes for the holy ones  
according to God's will.

### **Gospel [Mt 13:24-43](#)**

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying:  
“The kingdom of heaven may be likened  
to a man who sowed good seed in his field.  
While everyone was asleep his enemy came  
and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off.  
When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well.  
The slaves of the householder came to him and said,  
‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field?  
Where have the weeds come from?’  
He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’  
His slaves said to him,  
‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’  
He replied, ‘No, if you pull up the weeds  
you might uproot the wheat along with them.  
Let them grow together until harvest;  
then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters,  
“First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning;  
but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

He proposed another parable to them.  
“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed  
that a person took and sowed in a field.  
It is the smallest of all the seeds,  
yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants.  
It becomes a large bush,  
and the ‘birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.’”

He spoke to them another parable.  
“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast  
that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour  
until the whole batch was leavened.”

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables.  
He spoke to them only in parables,  
to fulfill what had been said through the prophet:  
*I will open my mouth in parables,  
I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation  
of the world.*

Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house.  
His disciples approached him and said,  
“Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”  
He said in reply, “He who sows good seed is the Son of Man,  
the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom.  
The weeds are the children of the evil one,

and the enemy who sows them is the devil.  
The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.  
Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire,  
so will it be at the end of the age.  
The Son of Man will send his angels,  
and they will collect out of his kingdom  
all who cause others to sin and all evildoers.  
They will throw them into the fiery furnace,  
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.  
Then the righteous will shine like the sun  
in the kingdom of their Father.  
Whoever has ears ought to hear.”

or [Mt 13:24-30](#)

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**Homily:** Parables are wonderful. Jesus very often spoke in parables. Most of the people of his time couldn’t read or write. But they loved a good story. Especially a good mystery story or one with a puzzle in it. A parable was a story that had a moral to it. The trick was that Jesus usually didn’t tell them what the moral was. They had to figure it out for themselves.

This can be just as interesting for us today. Take a parable of Jesus and try to figure it out. Think about it, pray on it, discuss it with your friends or relatives and see what happens. One of the more interesting ways is to do it with the family. You can find a whole bunch of parables in Luke. The three in today’s Gospel are taken from Matthew 13. Pick one, read it to the family and then ask everyone what they think it means. What’s the lesson for us? Start with the youngest first. They often have the most interesting insights because they think outside of the box. There is no right or wrong answer. Parables have many meanings and many lessons. Everyone gets a turn.

Notice the third parable today. “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened.” What does it mean? Who might the woman represent? What is the yeast? I can see your puzzled interest already.

The first parable, the one about the wheat and the weeds, was explained in the text. The Apostles couldn’t figure it out and they asked Jesus. He gave a very good explanation. The wheat is the good people, the weeds are the bad ones, and God chooses to wait until the end of the world to sort them all out. But there are many other possible explanations as well. I’d like to suggest one.

What if the wheat and the weeds represent something in us that is both good and bad, coexisting together? God gives every person certain gifts. Each one’s gifts are different, and can be used in a good way or a bad way. Let’s take an example. Suppose one of us prays like this: “Dear God, please take away my impatience.” Impatience is bad, like a weed. It sounds like a good, reasonable prayer. But if God is like the farmer in the parable he might say: “Hold on a second, my child. If I pull out of you your impatience, which is bad, I will also be pulling out of you something that is very good. I don’t want to do that.” What is the good thing he would be pulling out? Our quick mind! The reason we usually get so impatient is that we have a quick mind. We see quickly what the solution is, what needs to be done and we get impatient with those around us who don’t see it, who don’t get it. He doesn’t want to pull out the good with the bad. He would much rather that we learn to share gently with others the insights that we have.

Let’s take another example. Suppose a wife were to pray: “Dear God, please help my husband to not be so darned stubborn!” It sounds like a good prayer. But God, like the farmer, might reply: “If I pull the stubbornness out of your husband I would also be pulling out at the same time a wonderful gift that I gave him. I don’t want to do that.” What is the gift? What is the flip side of stubbornness? It is stick-to-it-iveness, tenacity. They are both the same gift, used badly or used wisely. Used badly it is stubbornness. Used wisely it is tenacity, the ability to stay with a problem until a solution is found, even through difficult times. It is a wonderful gift and God would rather see you help your husband to learn to use that gift more wisely, rather than remove it.

One last example. One might pray: “Dear Lord, help me not to be so critical of people and to gossip about them.” God might reply: “If I pull out that weed, I’d be pulling out some wonderful wheat at the same time. I don’t want to do that.” What is the wheat here? It is a wonderful sense of right and wrong, an ability to spot injustice and be upset by it. When you see the injustice what should you do about it? Criticizing the one doing the injustice or telling others about it is using the gift all wrong. Correcting the injustice, praying for the person, or helping to right the wrong are some of the ways to use the gift of insight more wisely.

You see, a parable can have many more than one meaning or one lesson and all of them could be valid. They are treasure troves of spirituality waiting to be opened. They might even lead us to a new way of praying. “Dear Lord, please help me to recognize the wonderful gifts that you have given to me, and help me to use them more wisely for your kingdom.”